

Galileo:

EUROPE - Nato warns military could be at risk - GALILEO NAVIGATION PROJECT.

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A senior Nato official has issued one of the most stark warnings yet that plans for Europe's Euros 3.6bn (\$3.38bn) Galileo satellite navigation project could put allied military forces in danger.

Speaking at a conference in Brussels this week, Robert G. Bell, Nato assistant secretary general for defence support, warned that use of certain signals being considered for Galileo could place "the lives of Nato's military forces at risk".

Until now, the most outspoken objections to Galileo have come from the US, which operates the military-run global positioning satellite system the EU project is intended to rival.

But speaking to the FT, Mr Bell said that Nato concerns about Galileo had increased since EU ministers gave the project the green light in March.

Yesterday US and European officials met to discuss co-operation between the satellite systems for the first time this year, but hopes of an agreement were not high.

Galileo has been mired in controversy for more than a year, partly because EU states such as Germany and the UK had worries about the financial viability of the project, which the European Commission has depicted as a commercial venture, but which also has the strategic goal of reducing dependence on the US.

Last December Jacques Chirac, the French president, warned that Europe risked becoming a "vassal" of the US if Galileo did not go ahead.

Mr Bell, a former US official, said that while "Nato has not taken a position either for or against Galileo" it had to be "able, if required, to deny a potential adversary's access to the satellite positioning services available from any other satellite navigation services (such as Galileo) during a conflict".

The problem is some of the frequencies which are being considered for high-security uses of Galileo could overlap frequencies of the US system that the US and Nato want to use for military operations.

Any attempt to jam such frequencies of Galileo could jam the US system's planned encrypted "M-code" as well, Mr Bell said, "resulting in a negative impact on Nato's military effectiveness in the area of operations, potentially risking fratricide on friendly forces and civil population".

He indicated problems with three of the four frequencies being considered for such uses of Galileo, and added that it would be hard to obviate the need for jamming by convincing the US and Nato that the Galileo signals could not be hacked into by an enemy.

However, Galileo supporters said a technical solution could be found.

"If Europe maintains its position on this one service it's going to cost a lot of money for

Office of Space Commercialization

the US to jam Galileo and not the US system - and it really comes down to money," said Mike Healy, director of Galileo Industries, the industrial consortium bidding to manage the programme. "But they will inevitably have to come to an agreement on this."

The turbulent project is also caught up in a squabble between Italy and Germany over which country should have its industrial headquarters.

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